

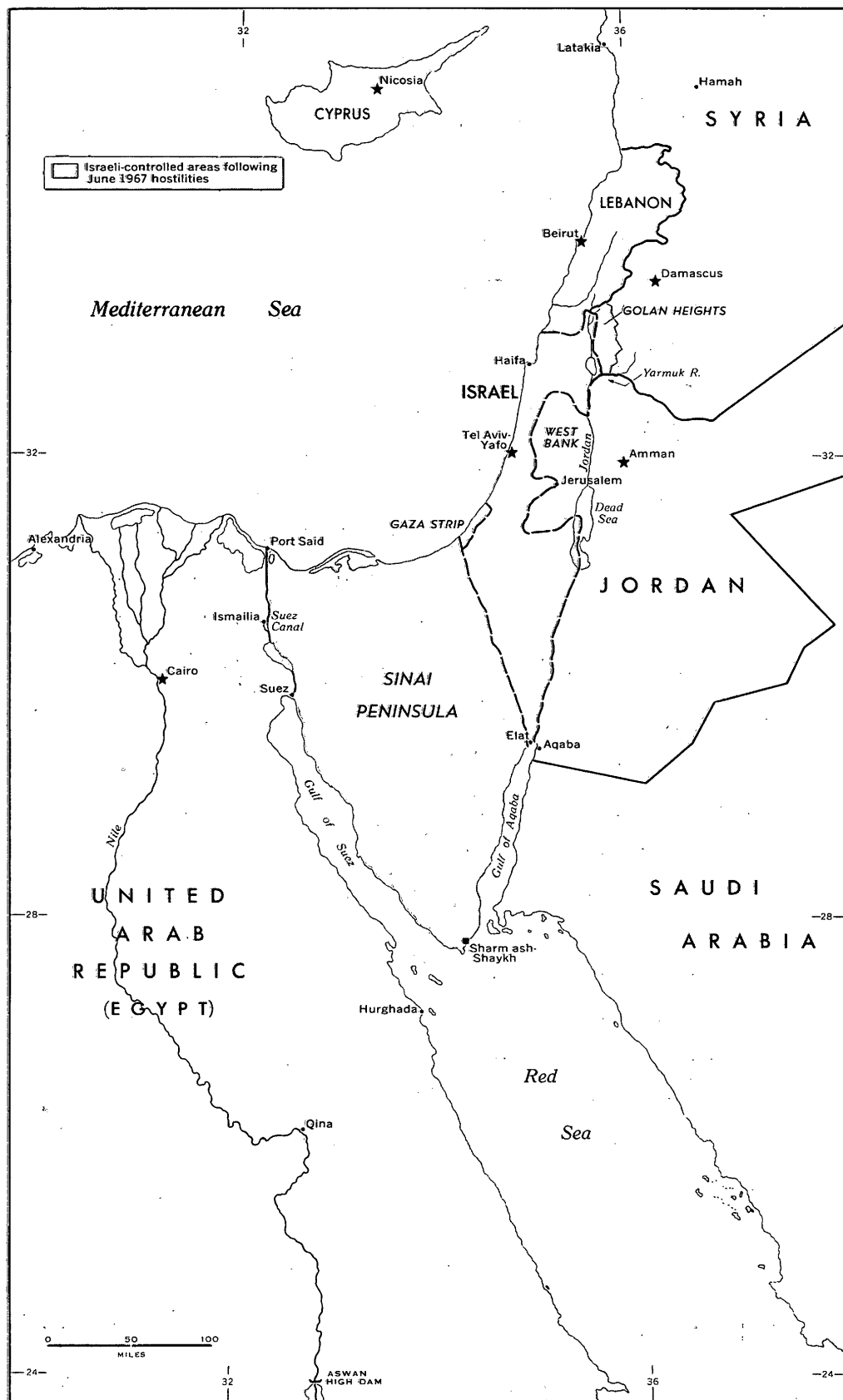
The President's Daily Brief

7 February 1969

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LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF
7 FEBRUARY 1969



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

8 February 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF

7 FEBRUARY 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

Soviet Ambassador Malik told Ambassador Yost yesterday that he thought the four powers should try to develop concrete suggestions on how the Middle Eastern problem could be resolved. He doubted that giving Jarring a new boost would add much to what had been done before. Malik, obviously not yet in receipt of Moscow's official reaction to the President's reply to the French note, spent most of his time with Yost probing for the US position. He did, however, agree that a major objective of the four-power talks should be agreement on the nature of a contractual arrangement assuring Israel it will have security but in a form acceptable to the Arabs. He said this coincides with the Soviet approach. [REDACTED]

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EUROPE

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[REDACTED]

A Belgian official has told our embassy in Brussels that the agreement on obligatory consultation reached by Britain and the five Community members is not open ended but is limited to specific issues. The list has not yet been agreed on, but he said it obviously will include Eastern Europe, the US, and the Third World. [REDACTED]

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing significant to report.

VIETNAM

The Soviet sounding of the US position on several key points during the conversation between Mr. Blake and Mr. Oberemko on 4 February doubtless reflects not only Moscow's interest but also Hanoi's, at least in general terms. Oberemko made it clear that the Soviet Union intends to stay right on top of the substantive talks and that we should regard the Soviets as a channel through which to pass Hanoi our views. In this meeting, however, there was nothing to suggest that this will be a two-way street, at least for the present.

Without knowing who initiated this particular conversation, it is difficult to judge whether Oberemko's pointed questions reflect a direct and fairly urgent request for Soviet action from Hanoi or whether it is simply the first in what could become a series of general efforts on the part of the Soviets to sound out our position. We tend to believe the latter is the more likely

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explanation. It does, however, open up the possibility of an indirect exchange of views between Hanoi and Washington without either having to back down from its initial position on how the talks should proceed.

Regardless of whether the Soviets were acting under a specific or a general request from Hanoi, the points raised by Oberemko probably were intended to be taken as an indication of the subjects of prime interest to Hanoi. Both the Soviets and the North Vietnamese have tried on various occasions to draw out the US position on a political settlement. This, however, is the most direct and pointed effort to date.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

There is nothing significant to report.

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

The Soviets have taken a significant step toward improving their credibility and leverage in Israel by allowing renewed emigration of Jews from the USSR to Israel. [REDACTED] Mos- 50X1
cow reopened the gates to emigrants last September, at the same time it began its diplomatic campaign for an Arab-Israeli settlement. All such emigration had been halted after the Arab-Israeli war in June 1967. Up to mid-January, some 600 Soviet Jews with relatives in Israel had already departed. More than 200 of these left during the first two weeks of January. All ages apparently are represented, including at least 170 children.

The Israelis view Moscow's change in policy as another indication that the Kremlin desires to inch toward normalizing Soviet-Israeli relations and that it expects in return a certain amount of Israeli flexibility toward its proposals for a Middle East settlement. As a matter of fact, the Moscow move will probably achieve this goal, and in addition, because so much emotion is involved, will probably cause the Israelis to hesitate before they take any action which might jeopardize the flow of emigrants.

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EUROPE

Somewhat to our surprise, the latest effort to forge closer political links in Western Europe has not produced an outright veto from De Gaulle. This initiative, an Italian plan for consultation among the members of the Western European Union (WEU) on important issues, was accepted for study by the WEU Council yesterday. In addition, Britain and the five Community members (France excepted) apparently have gone ahead and bound themselves to some kind of obligatory consultation.

The French reserved their position on this latter point, but they did not veto the idea outright. They also made clear their unhappiness with the proposal that the consultation notion itself be given further study, but in the end they went along with the rest of the members--perhaps because they thought it would be better to use delaying tactics later than to impose a flat negative now.

Rome's initiative, heavily backed by Foreign Minister Nenni, grew out of the attempts by the Five to outflank the French veto of Britain's application to join the European Communities. The idea was that political consultations would forge new links between Britain and the Six, and implicit in the proposal was the notion that if France refused to go along, the other five might start talks with the British. France's

reluctance to veto the Italian proposal suggests that Paris may indeed have felt constrained to give a little ground.

We do not expect any short-term improvement in Britain's chances for Community membership as a result of this maneuvering, and we do not think any of the participants do either. Nevertheless, the British are trying to exploit the opening. Foreign Secretary Stewart has invited the Six--in the person of their ambassadors in London--to talks aiming toward a common position on the Middle East. If the French decline the British invitation, Paris risks imputing to Britain the role of spokesman for "Europe" in the four-power talks.

The recent spate of press stories [redacted] concerning a possible new effort to set up a supranational European political community may be related to the WEU efforts. The resurgence of talk along these lines bears some earmarks of a campaign by Jean Monnet and other supporters of a federal Europe--apparently supported by Nenni. The federalists may be trying to give an institutional structure to the loose consultative framework now being pressed for in WEU.

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing of significance to report.

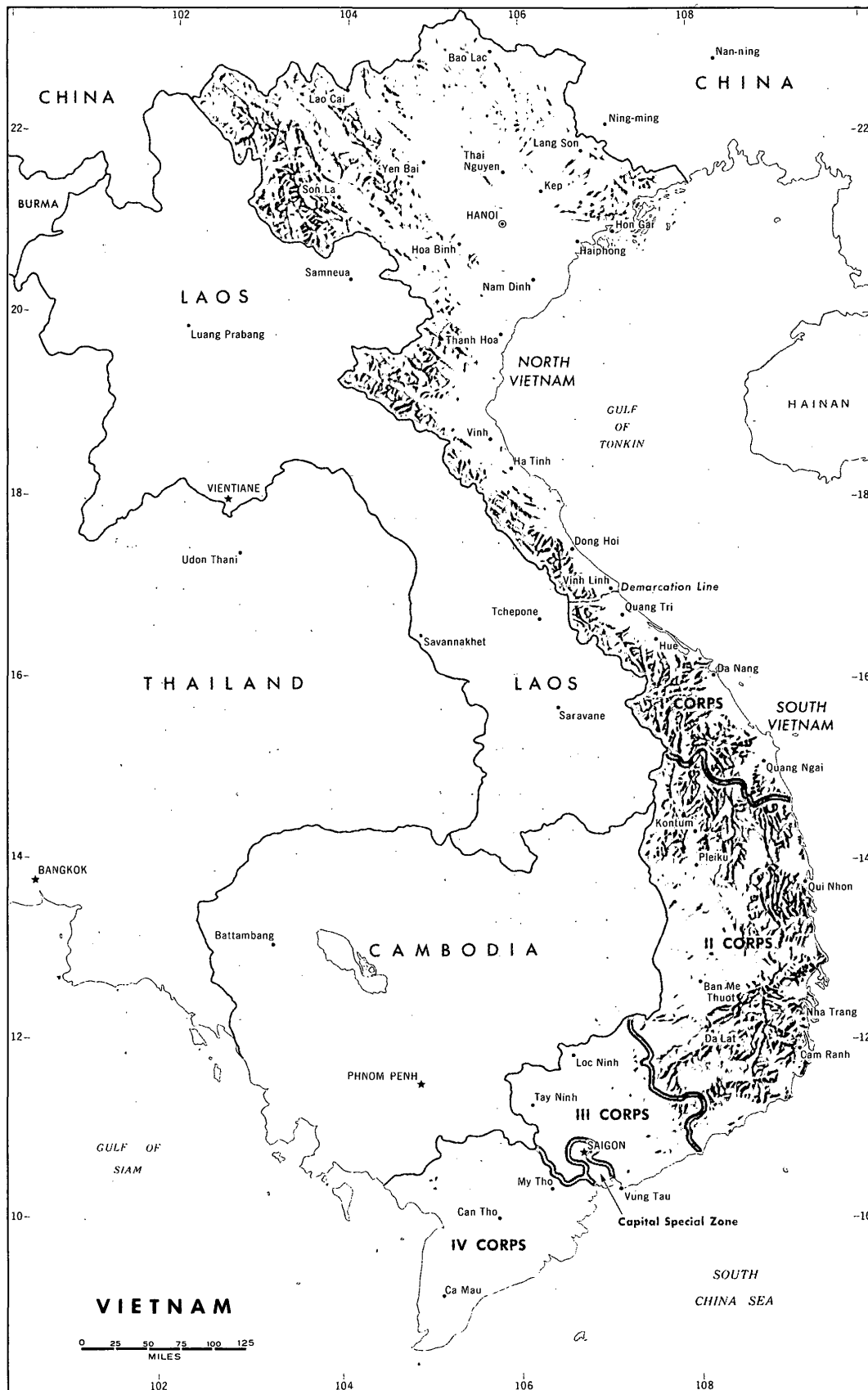
VIETNAM

The only noteworthy point we found in the Communist presentations at yesterday's Paris session was Tran Buu Kiem's continued emphasis on the "peace cabinet" theme. His prediction of no progress in the talks until the present Saigon government is overthrown may be only rhetoric, but it seems clear that the Communists have no intention of giving any ground in Paris until they have determined if this idea can be translated into political results in South Vietnam.

The "peace cabinet" idea has been the main Communist theme since the bombing halt. In our view, it is based on real conviction that widespread sentiment for peace in South Vietnam can be more effectively mobilized in support of Hanoi's objectives.

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The Communists regard the peace issue as one on which a wide spectrum of politically active elements in South Vietnam can be united. They know that most South Vietnamese would be reluctant to endorse a coalition



government with the Communists. By putting their demands in the form of broad, nationalist generalities, however, the Communists hope to convince politically significant elements in South Vietnam that changes in the present regime would lead to fruitful discussions with the Communists and would eventually open the way to an acceptable political settlement and an end to the fighting.

In pursuing these objectives, the Communists are using both the carrot and the stick. Military pressure and hardline propaganda frequently are accompanied or followed up by displays of "flexibility" and "realism" both in public and in private. Tran Buu Kiem, the Front representative whose uncompromising stance at yesterday's Paris session made headlines, took an entirely different tack in an interview published in a French journal on Monday. There he went out of his way to give the impression of softening the Front's stand, especially toward the GVN, and to stress the Communists' willingness to bargain on such fundamental matters as a coalition government, elections, and even working with the present South Vietnamese leadership.

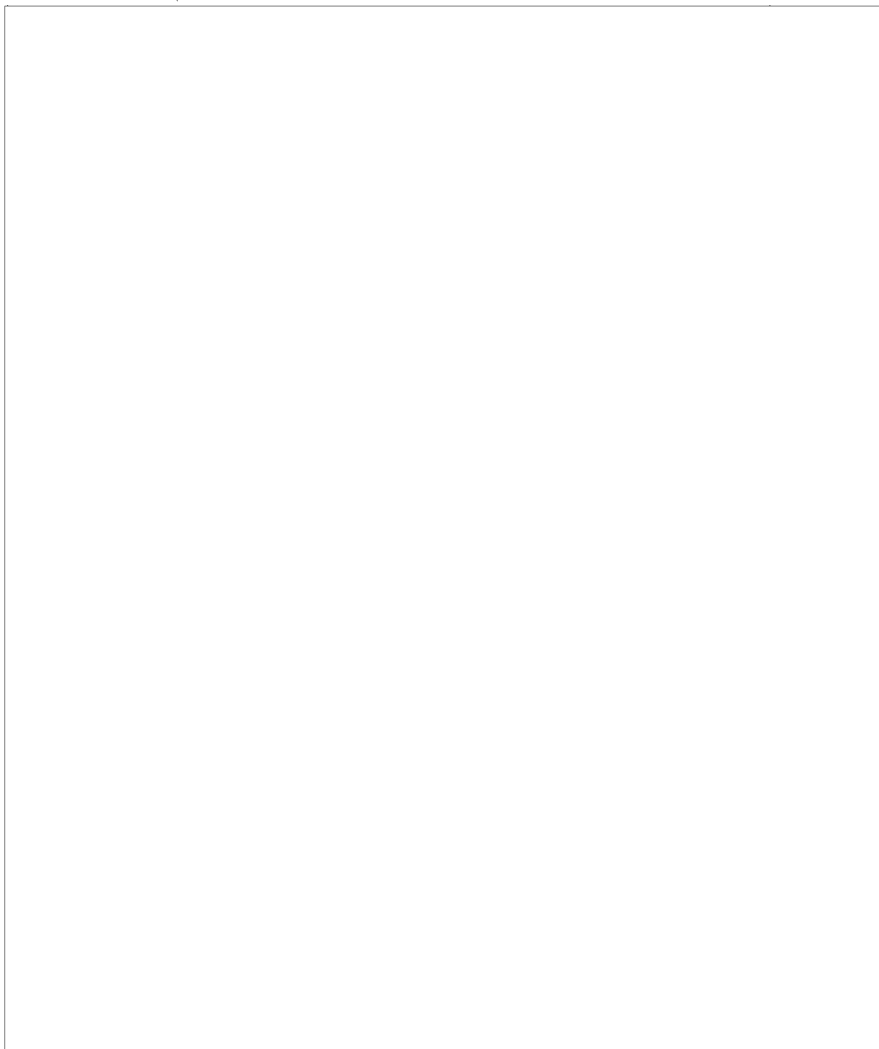
We are not able to measure adequately what inroads the Communists have made in this campaign to date.

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[REDACTED] the current concern 50X1
in South Vietnam about peace sentiments and signs of
intrigue about changes in the composition of the gov-
ernment are playing right into the hands of the Commu-
nists. They are trying hard to foster the theme of a
"peace cabinet" in the Buddhist movement and to sell
the same idea in labor, student, and intellectual circles
in South Vietnam.

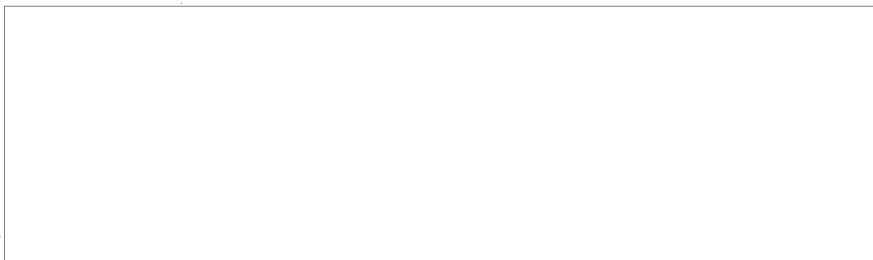
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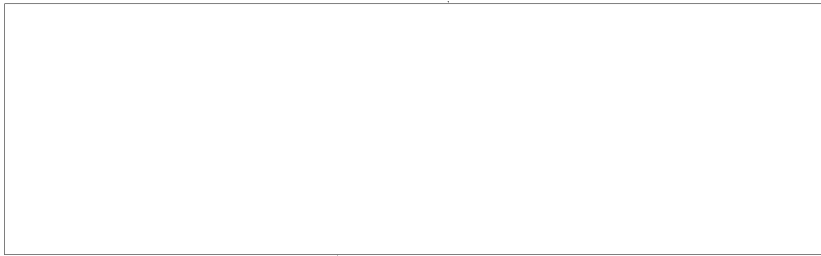
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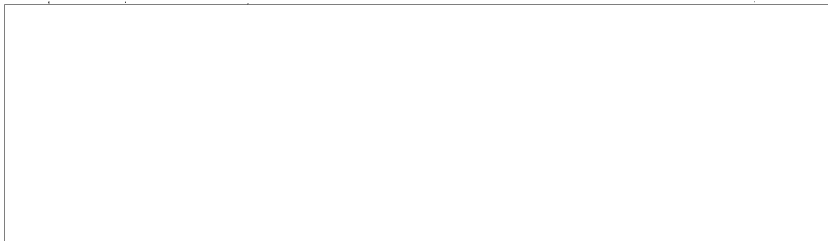
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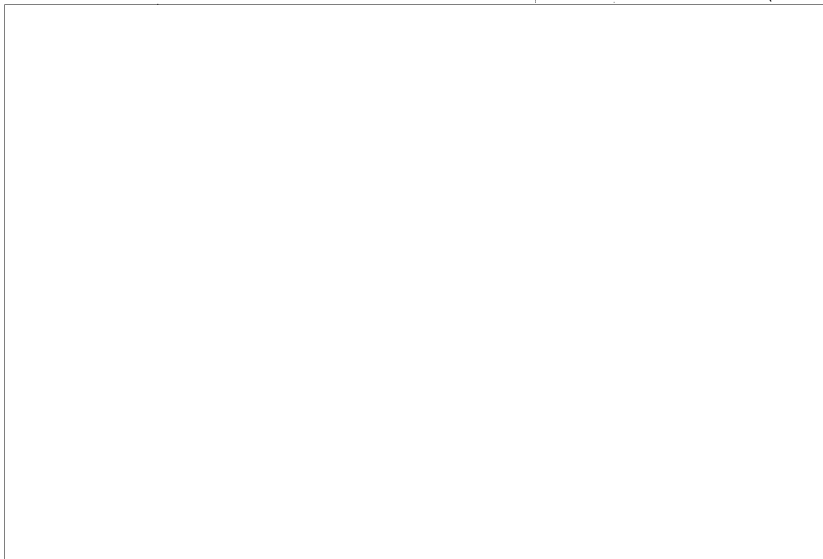
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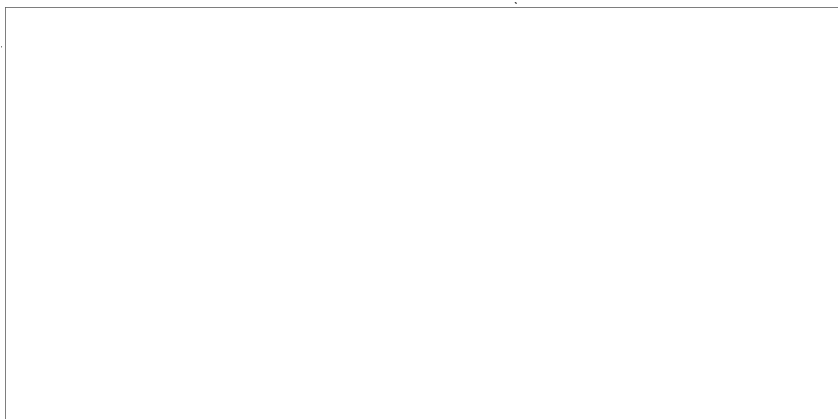
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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

IRAN

An Iranian delegation will leave for Moscow tomorrow for the purpose, we believe, of negotiating a second arms purchase agreement. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] purchases would be financed from the more

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than \$1 billion Iran hopes to earn from the delivery of natural gas to the USSR in the period from 1970 to 1987.

In January 1967, the Shah signed his first arms agreement with the Soviet Union for \$110 million worth of vehicles, including armored personnel carriers and antiaircraft guns. The Shah was piqued at the time over what he thought to be the slowness of the US in meeting his arms needs. More important, he saw in Soviet equipment one way to spend the money Iran would earn from the gas pipeline to the Soviet Union now under construction.

VENEZUELA

In the wake of Wednesday's ambush of an army patrol, the Venezuelan armed forces have launched a major offensive against pro-Castro guerrillas in the eastern part of the country. Reports that a number of guerrillas have been killed and one guerrilla leader captured are still unconfirmed.

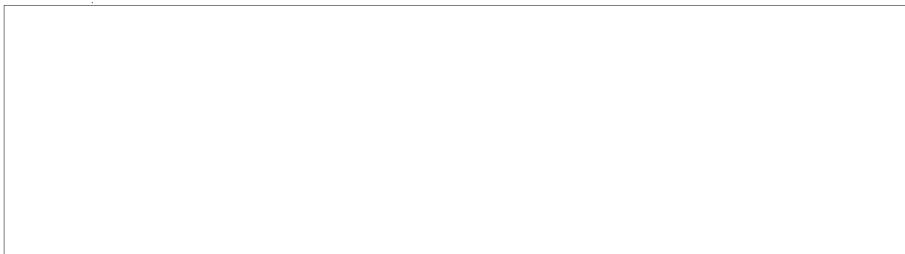
THAILAND

Balloting for the lower house of the National Assembly--the first nationwide elections in more than ten years--will

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take place on 10 February. Under the new constitution, promulgated last year by the military leadership to legitimize its rule, the upper house is appointed and the power of the legislature is in addition carefully circumscribed. These elections therefore pose no threat to the establishment.

The government nevertheless fears embarrassment. A current reading suggests that the newly formed government party, still considerably disorganized, will fall short of a majority even though winning the largest bloc of seats.



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As an experiment in democratization, the elections have generated high public interest in most areas of the country, particularly in Bangkok. Although the Thai people have been reasonably happy under the military regime, there are a number of grievances which may now become more significant under the new political liberalization.

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